

## Resources for Haitian Earthquake

### Looking For Relatives

Families of Americans living in Haiti who are trying to find the status of their loved ones are encouraged to contact the State Department at 1-888-407-4747. This line is experiencing a high volume of calls at this time, so some callers may receive a recording. To better handle these requests, the State Department has established an e-mail address as well: [Haiti-Earthquake@state.gov](mailto:Haiti-Earthquake@state.gov).

A top priority of the State Department is accounting for the thousands of American citizens who are currently in Haiti. US citizens in Haiti have been urged to contact the Embassy via email at [ACSPaP@state.gov](mailto:ACSPaP@state.gov) to request assistance or call the Embassy's Consular Task Force at 509-2229-8942, 509-2229-8089, 509-2229-8322, or 509-2229-8672.

The Red Cross has also set up a Family Links website managed by the ICRC, in cooperation with the tracing services of the Haitian Red Cross Society and of National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies throughout the world, to assist in the process of restoring contact between separated family members:

- [Family Links website for Haiti»](#)
- [Cette page en français»](#)

### Haiti Relief Donations Qualify for Immediate Tax Relief

People who give to charities providing earthquake relief in Haiti can claim these donations on the tax return they are completing this season, according to the Internal Revenue Service.

Taxpayers who itemize deductions on their 2009 return qualify for this special tax relief provision, enacted Jan. 22. Only cash contributions made to these charities after Jan. 11, 2010, and before March 1, 2010, are eligible. This includes contributions made by text message, check, credit card or debit card.

Taxpayers can benefit from their donations, almost immediately, by filing their 2009 returns early, filing electronically and choosing direct deposit. Refunds take as few as ten days and can be directly deposited into a savings, checking or brokerage account, or used to purchase Series I U.S. savings bonds.

The new law only applies to cash (as opposed to property) contributions. The contributions must be made specifically for the relief of victims in areas affected by the Jan. 12 earthquake in Haiti. Taxpayers have the option of deducting these contributions on either their 2009 or 2010 returns, but not both.

Taxpayers should be sure their contributions go to qualified charities. Most organizations eligible to receive tax-deductible donations are listed in a searchable online database available on IRS.gov under Search for Charities. Some organizations, such as churches or governments, may be qualified even though they are not listed on IRS.gov. Donors can find out more about organizations helping Haitian earthquake victims from agencies such as USAID.

The IRS reminds donors that contributions to foreign organizations generally are not deductible. IRS Publication 526, Charitable Contributions, provides information on making contributions to charities.

#### More Resources

- [White House»](#)
- [State Department»](#)
- [USAID»](#)

#### Assistance for Haiti Relief Efforts

The State Department has established a dedicated web page that offers advice for anyone wishing to provide assistance to those affected by the earthquake:

- [State Department Haiti Earthquake website»](#)

The Center for International Disaster Information (CIDI) provides information and guidance in support of appropriate international disaster relief:

- Center for International Disaster Information (CIDI) website»

The Greater Haitian American Chamber of Commerce Orlando is coordinating all of the efforts of the local churches and organizations in the area. Their contact information is below.

Greater Haitian American Chamber of Commerce of Orlando

Michel Dorcean

(407) 599.0777 x101

#### Haitian Earthquake Relief Fraud Alert

The FBI has issued a fraud alert, reminding Internet users who receive appeals to donate money in the aftermath of Tuesday's earthquake in Haiti to apply a critical eye and do their due diligence before responding to those requests. Past tragedies and natural disasters have prompted individuals with criminal intent to solicit contributions purportedly for a charitable organization and/or a good cause. Therefore, before making a donation of any kind, consumers should adhere to certain guidelines, to include the following:

- Do not respond to any unsolicited (spam) incoming e-mails, including clicking links contained within those messages.
- Be skeptical of individuals representing themselves as surviving victims or officials asking for donations via e-mail or social networking sites.
- Verify the legitimacy of nonprofit organizations by utilizing various Internet-based resources that may assist in confirming the group's existence and its nonprofit status rather than following a purported link to the site.
- Be cautious of e-mails that claim to show pictures of the disaster areas in attached files because the files may contain viruses. Only open attachments from known senders.
- Make contributions directly to known organizations rather than relying on others to make the donation on your behalf to ensure contributions are received and used for intended purposes.

- Do not give your personal or financial information to anyone who solicits contributions: Providing such information may compromise your identity and make you vulnerable to identity theft.

Anyone who has received an e-mail referencing the above information or anyone who may have been a victim of this or a similar incident should notify the Internet Crime Complaint Center at [www.ic3.gov](http://www.ic3.gov) .